

Are there other proposed cost adjustments contained in HB 140?

Yes. The bill would standardize youth, senior, disabled, and nonresident free and discounted licenses at 50 percent of the equivalent full priced license. Additionally, seniors would receive a discounted license at age 67 versus the current age of 62. Military service-based free and discounted licenses would remain the same as past years.

What is the proposed new base hunting license?

Rather than increasing the cost of individual species tags, the base hunting license would be an annual prerequisite to purchasing other hunting licenses. The License and Funding Advisory Committee, after nearly a year of facilitated public meetings, determined that this approach would spread the fiscal impact across all hunters, rather than just those buying a single species tag. The base hunting license would include the hunting access enhancement fee that is already assessed when someone purchases a conservation license.

Why not increase the cost of the conservation license instead of creating an additional hunting license?

The conservation license is required to hunt or fish. Transferring the \$8 cost of the base hunting license to the conservation license would mean that someone who only fishes would have to pay that increase, too. The legislation already proposes an increase in the cost of fishing licenses, which means that anglers would be subject to two fee increases. Additionally, the base hunting license offers the advantage of not having to increase the cost of each individual species tag, something that might have to occur in association with an increase in the cost of a conservation license.

When would the new fees become effective?

If approved, new fees would go into effect March 1, 2016.

What would be lost if fees aren't adjusted?

The Legislature's remaining choices, in whole or in part, will boil down to program cuts or shifting earmarked funds. If program cuts are chosen, FWP will have to consider closing some fish hatcheries, ending some upkeep at fishing access sites, cutting game damage response efforts, reducing enforcement efforts and more. If shifts of earmarked funds are favored by the Legislature, accounts used to run 19 programs would need to be cut entirely or by at least 40 percent per program to include upland game bird habitat enhancement, Block Management, Habitat Montana, and wolf monitoring, to name a few.

HB 140: An Act revising laws related to hunting and fishing licenses

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is FWP in need of a license fee increase at this time?

Historically, the Legislature has increased license fees on a 10-year cycle based on projected revenue and expenditures. The last general license increase for residents was approved in 2005, which was predicted to keep FWP financially stable for 10 years—or until now.

What's been done so far to address the budget situation?

Two years ago, FWP permanently cut \$1.2 million from its budget and shifted \$2 million more from state hunting and fishing license dollars to federal funding. Cuts were made to wildlife and fisheries programs, shooting range grants and administrative costs. Shifts to federal revenue were possible because of a spike in firearm and ammo sales, which is not expected to be a sustainable trend.

Why the change to a 4-year review cycle instead of a 10-year review cycle?

Compared to a 10-year cycle, a 4-year funding review cycle would allow the Legislature a closer connection between spending and revenue, result in a smaller increase in license fees when necessary, and allow for timelier and more accurate budget forecasting.

How would HB 140 affect most resident Montana hunters and anglers?

Residents of Montana would pay an additional \$3 to fish and an additional \$8 to hunt.

Would HB 140 increase nonresident fees as well?

There would be some upward adjustments to nonresident fishing licenses and an increase in nonresident moose, goat, sheep and bison licenses. Some nonresident fees were already increased when "I-161" was approved by voters in 2011.

What is the rationale for capping the price of the nonresident big game combination license (so called "B-10" licenses) at \$999 and the nonresident deer combination license (so called "B-11" licenses) at \$625?

Revenue from the sale of these nonresident licenses accounts for almost two-thirds of FWP's funding for fish and wildlife management programs that benefit everyone. Current statute requires the B-10 and B-11 license prices be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index. The price of the B-10 license is nearing \$1,000. There is concern that there will be significant buyer resistance if the price exceeds this amount.